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A-ONE #0630   07/23/04

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->From the Editor's Keyboard                  "Saying it like it is!"
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This past weekend, I happened to be checking the news and weather reports
for the upcoming week (this past week) to see what I might be missing had I
scheduled my recent vacation for different weeks. I was kind of elated to
see that rain was forecast for most of the week! Well, that forecast didn't
hold up! The rain held off, and we've had some really oppressive weather
this past week - at least compared to what we've been having up to now! The
only down side was that had I been on vacation this past week, I would have
had more of an opportunity to enjoy the comforts of our pool. Otherwise,
this weather is for the birds!

Returning to work after a vacation is no picnic! Not only do you feel a
little down that the vacation is over (okay, a lot down!), but just walking
into the job to see two weeks of work piled up is downright inhumane! I've
been back a week, and I still can't see the top of my desk yet! And as I'm
trying to clean up the work from when I was gone, new stuff gets added
daily! Yes, it's a fair trade-off as far as I'm concerned! I'm sure that
Joe will have similar sentiments.

I know that Joe has been drilling into people's brains lately about
registering to vote, and then actually getting out to vote come election
time. I couldn't agree more. And, I really hate politics, for the most
part. Yet, it's my right to do so - people fought and died to give us that
right. Don't ever give it up! Speaking of elections, the Democratic
National Convention is being held in Boston next week. In and of itself, it
sounds like an incredible event, and an important coup for Boston to play
host. But, in this post-9/11 time, I think this event is going to cause
more hassle than it's worth. The security measures are going to be
unbelievable! Getting in and out of the city next week is going to be
incredibly difficult, if possible at all. Thankfully, I moved out of Boston
a few years ago and won't be directly impacted. I guess it all has to be
done, but the cost may be too high. It's almost humorous in a way. The
local news station that I watch on television has a daily update for the DNC
called "The DNC Survival Guide". During this news segment, they provide
daily updates to the new security decisions, what roads and services will
be closed, and other things that will impact "routine" life in and around
the city. I think people are going to be glad when this event is over! All
for a week's worth of politicking (that reads P-A-R-T-Y!) and to listen to a
presidential candidate's nomination acceptance speech to the delegates.

Until next time...

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MiNT on Coldfire

Anders Eriksson has announced:

I just want to let you know that the MiNT kernel runs now also on the
Coldfire. I wrote a detailed description of how I ported the kernel to this
platform. You can read it at:

http://acp.atari.org/articles/mcf5407eval/mcf5407eval.html

There is also a summary about the TOS-dependencies of MiNT (at least the
needed things for the startup), I stumbled across.

All in all, I must say that I liked the fact that MiNT leaves the hardware
initialization for timers, keyboard etc. to TOS. This enabled me to perform
these initializations in a Coldfire-specific way in advance and then
calling the MiNT kernel. (very much like a PC BIOS, that sets the system to
a well defined state)

Frank told me that he wants to make MiNT take over the whole system and
kick out all dependencies to the underlying TOS. This means, to include all
drivers that are needed for MiNT's startup (keyboard, screen, timers etc.)
into the MiNT kernel. I would like to keep MiNT behaving like it does now.
The great advantage for now is, that MiNT makes no assumptions about any
devices except the CPU.

My current execution environment for the MiNT kernel is very small (ca. 600
lines of code). It supports character output and keyboard input (over a
serial connection). There is no block device support yet.

Thank you all for your great achievements with MiNT!

Greetings,
Norman

http://acp.atari.org/articles/mcf5407eval/mcf5407eval.html

Open Source Gaming Galore!

Anders Eriksson has announced:

Gildor, who brought you the Yeti3D engine port to Atari continues his
porting frenzy. We've gotten no less than four complete games ported from
other platforms to the Atari. Ok ok, which ones? Here goes..

    * Wolfenstein 3D

    Ported from the original, so everything's there as it should be. Demo
levels included in the archive.

* Spear of Destiny

      A Wolfenstein 3D spin-off, very similar but different levels and some
new stuff (textures with transparency for instance).

      * LTris

      Well the name says it all really. You need a 25MHz bus for this one,
or a SuperVidel; it needs 640x480 16bit hi-colour graphics.

      * Moonlander

      A remake of an old Atari classic game. This one also needs 25MHz bus
or a SuperVidel, same reasons as above.

      * Yeti3D

      Well as a little bonus, an updated version of the Yeti3D engine, now
with better low res mode (centered graphics etc).

These portings are all using the latest SDL versions, so they should be
using the fast C2P routines from Mikael Kalms/TBL. Gildor also tells us
that the games runs _much_ better in MiNT than TOS (MagiC untested).

Wolfenstein 3D: http://files.dhs.nu/files_game/wolf3d.zip
Spear of Destiny: http://files.dhs.nu/files_game/spear.zip
Moonlander: http://files.dhs.nu/files_game/lander.zip
LTris: http://files.dhs.nu/files_game/ltris.zip
Yeti3D: http://files.dhs.nu/files_game/yeti3d.zip

                         ASMA 2.8 Released

Another update to the famous 8-bit music collection called Atari SAP Music
Archive has been released. It adds 70 new songs and now the whole
collection has exceeded 10 MBytes! Get 1840 POKEY tunes and players at the
ASMA homepage.

URL: http://asma.atari.org/

                         New MyAES Release

The multitasking AES for (Free)MiNT called MyAES has been upgraded with new
features.

Highlights from the new release includes:

* 256-colour icon support
* Loadable keymaps (compatible with MagiC)
* Window resize from all window borders
* Real-time scrolling

http://myaes.free.fr/

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Remember that thing I was talking about
where the number of posts goes down as the temperature goes up? Well, it
must be hot as all get-out SOMEWHERE. <g>

The number of posts is incredibly small this week, so it's going to be a
short column. I guess that the outdoor activities and vacations and such
are taking their toll again. Although I feel it now much more than in
years past.

Oh, one thing I'd like to mention before we get into the posts from the
UseNEt. I'd like to thank Fred Horvat for his short article last week
about the weekly Atari chat. It's nice to know that there are those who
look forward to something as simple as a weekly chat with some old (or
new) Atari buddies.

Again, if you want to join the chat on Tuesday evenings, just point your
telnet or ssh client to atarinews.org and use bbs as both the login name
and password to get in. From there, if you haven't already done so,
create an account for yourself and then hit "T" for talk and then "C"
for chat. After that, all you need to do is supply a 'handle' and you'll
be in the chatroom with the rest of us. Chats are held every Tuesday
night at 9:00 eastern / 6:00 pacific time. Be there or be square!

Now let's get to the STuff from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
====================================

Mikael Holm asks for help in locating an old disk:

"I just got hold of a book called "Introducing Atari ST Machine Code"
by R. Pearson and S Hodgson, published by zzSoft (ISBN 1 873423 01 2)

It is supposed to be accompanied by a disk containing an assembler,
editor, some sample programs etc...

Does anybody out there have this disk? If so can I have it? Or a copy
or image file of it?"

John Oakes tells Mikael:

"I have the original disk if you want a copy. It small
enough to download if you wish."

Coda also gets involved:

"I also have this book, and wouldn't mind the disk if anyone has it...."

Sam F. looks around for a new keyboard:

"Anybody got a working TT030/Mega/MegaSTE keyboard laying around which they don't need and are willing to let go of it for a reasonable price?"

Mark Duckworth tells Sam:

"I should have at least one good MSTe/TT keyboard that works. I have Mega ST keyboards but they're all flaky.. Mystery mouse movements and that sort of thing."

Sam asks Mark:

"So, if that keyboard is for sale, how much do you want for it? And would it be practical on a re-cased Falcon mb in a tower case?"

Mark replies:

"Indeed it's practical. My setup is a falcon style to mega ste style keyboard adapter (home made, but they are selling them on ebay for $1.00 or so). Then I bought a very long 6 wire RJ-11 telephone cable from radio shack. Cut the wire right down the center, flip it on one side and resolder (not sure why the keyboard cable is like this, but if you DON'T do this you will fry the keyboard controller and kill the keyboard). And resolder everything then and tape it up. Then you can put your computer wherever you want and have a long cable. As far as the one I have, I have to first have the motivation to find it and test it. Then I can decide on a price based on condition. Some of them are discolored and have cigarette burns from their prior owner. What condition are you interested in?"

Sam now asks about his Falcon re-casing project:

"After fooling around a bit, I can maneuver the falcon mb onto the backplane without having to remove the backplane.

My question now is, I drilled a practice hole on the mainboard and tried to screw in a standoff but...I nearly had to force it in and the threads on the standoff got a bit mashed.

Is there a special way the holes for the standoffs need to be drilled?"

Steve Sweet rushes in and tells Sam:

"No!!! Stop, DO NOT DRILL THE MOTHERBOARD (Shouting intentional)

Sam calms Steve:

"Sorry for the confusion....what I meant to say was that I drilled a practice hole in the backplane....ha ha ha ha!!   :)

Sheesh, I'm not that stupid, though some would argue otherwise!!"

Mark Duckworth tells Sam:

"I drilled larger than the standoffs and then found the proper nuts for the
back of the standoff at home depot and bolted them in so that there was no
chance of them coming back out. If your standoffs have good depth you can
even throw a washer in there for good measure."

Sam tells Mark:

"That sounds like a great idea. Now, where can I purchase standoffs and
the screws that go with them? I've got 7 standoffs but not the screws. I
guess Home Depot would be a good start eh?

Thanks a bunch Mark!!!!"

Well folks, that's it for this week. See? I told you it was going to be a
short column. Make sure you tune in again next week, same time, same
station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - 'Missing' Game Is Unnerving!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""   'Pure Pinball' Coming to Xbox!
                                    'The Guy Game'! "Chipping" Banned!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                    'Missing' Game Is Unnerving, Captivating

Three years ago, Electronic Arts combined phone messages, e-mail, faxes,
streaming video, Web sites and AOL Instant Messenger to create a conspiracy
game known as "Majestic."

It was intriguing. It was ambitious. It was unique. But for a variety of
reasons, it didn't last.

Now Lexis Numerique has scaled down the concept to create "Missing: Since January," which also tries to give players a sense that they're solving a real-life mystery.

There are no faxes, phone calls or AOL messages.

But "Missing: Since January," which was released in Europe about six months ago as "In Memoriam" and is distributed in North America by the Adventure Co., does give you a sense that you're communicating on the Internet with a disturbed computer genius.

You'll have to do some real-life exploration of the Web to get the solutions to several puzzles. And to help you in your quest, you will receive e-mail, purportedly from a television production company and people who are trying to find a missing reporter and his girlfriend.

You can sample the plot on the Web site for the fictional production company (http://www.skl-network.com). There you'll see information about 40-year-old reporter Jack Lorski, read some stories he was working on, and inspect his desk as he left it when he disappeared with Karen Gijman, a 32-year-old independent illustrator.

The $20 game comes with a black CD-ROM that, according to the story, was sent to the network by someone who calls himself (or herself) "The Phoenix" and claims to be holding Lorski and Gijman hostage.

Obviously the Phoenix knows his way around computers. Once you load up the disk, he begins communicating with you, taunting you and, quite literally, playing with you.

He keeps unveiling a series of puzzles and mini-games that must be solved in order to get more information about the Lorski case. Some are pretty rudimentary, requiring nothing more than clicking on objects that dart around the screen. Some are pretty challenging. Some are very disturbing. ("Missing" is rated for mature audiences.)

One puzzle includes a movie showing the girlfriend's face underwater. She's struggling. Someone is obviously trying to drown her.

In fact, the whole game radiates the aura of a disturbed mind, with haunting, unsettling sound effects that will make you want to keep the lights on if you play at night.

Some challenges involve real detective work, using a combination of real Web sites and those created just for the game.

In one case, you must search the Internet to find the identities of six men shown in an old photograph. Fortunately, the names are so unusual that a search engine like Google quickly tracks down the picture.

Another puzzle requires players to piece together portions of film showing an assassination. You'll also have to find the name of a girl with the tattoo of a snake on her belly.

The more puzzles you solve, the more the Phoenix reveals.

You learn that the reporter had stumbled onto an old Super 8 mm movie camera. The film, once developed, shows two men carrying out a murder. The owner of the camera was apparently killed when the murderers spotted him.

Lorski had become obsessed with finding out where the pictures were taken, who was murdered, and who the killers were.

As you progress through the game, you see video footage taken by Lorski and Gijman, who has her own link to the case.

If you get stuck, you won't be alone in your quest. E-mails sent to you from the ersatz production company and other people supposedly trying to help you find the missing couple will give you hints or tell you where to find tools to help analyze the evidence.

"Majestic" failed because it was an open-ended subscription-based game where signing up was so complicated that nine out of 10 players who started to register never completed the process. And the streaming video could be very choppy.

"Missing: Since January" is a one-shot, self-contained game where signing up consists of choosing a log-in name and giving your e-mail address. The game instantly mails you a password, and you're ready to play.

And because all the videos are on a CD-ROM, they run smoothly.

Whether "Missing" succeeds in North America will depend on how many computer owners would rather solve mysteries and puzzles than pick up animated guns and blast everything in sight.

Pure Pinball Coming for the Xbox

Iridon Interactive and XS Games LLC have announced an agreement that will see XS Games publish Pure Pinball for the Xbox throughout North America, with distribution handled by Take 2 Interactive.

Featuring photo-realistic 3D graphics, Pure Pinball will test player's pinball skills across more than 30 challenges and missions, spread across four table layouts inspired by authentic American pinball designs. Each table layout provides a distinct challenge, and the mission structure will test the skills of even the best of players.

"The Xbox delivers the power we need to provide the most realistic pinball experience on any platform", said Iridon CEO Bjorn Larsson. "Pure Pinball is the closest you'll get to owning a real pinball machine without actually buying one."

"We're proud to being able to bring Pure Pinball to the Xbox", said XS Games CEO Steve Grossman. "The realism of the game brings the fun and enjoyment of the pinball genre to the Xbox for the first time ever, and pinball fans will not be disappointed."

Players can also share their high scores on Xbox Live with other players from around the world, competing in a next generation flipper fest to see who can prove themselves a true pinball wizard.

Pure Pinball for the Xbox is scheduled for release across North America in early August 2004 at an estimated retail price of $20 USD.

Features

* Complete more than 30 challenges and missions across 4 tables based
    on authentic American pinball table architecture.
  * Photo-realistic 3D graphics create lifelike pinball machines, with
    each table created from more than 150,000 polygons, all rendered in
    real time.
  * Making use of Xbox Live, players can compete for world dominance by
    sharing high scores with other players from all over the world.
  * The Xbox Controller vibration functions allows for trigger sensitive
    flippers, allowing players to feel the ball, offering a level of
    realism missing from other pinball titles.
  * Making use of a next generation physics engine, with more than 1,500
    calculations per second, the game provides unparalleled ball movement
    and collision detection within the 3D environment of the table.
  * Multiple camera setups are possible using the real-time 3D graphics
    engine, allowing you to view the pinball table in a complete
    overview, close-up on the ball, traditional scrolling style, or even
    following the ball using the 'ball-cam'.
  * Advanced transform & lighting technology makes for amazing special
    effects, including real-time light flares, metallic and glass
    reflections and decorative backlights.

Tables

  * Feel the adrenaline in the Excessive Speed table, winning race
    missions to prove your handling ability.
  * Fight the good fight with the World War table, completing mission
    assignments to win the war.
  * Ride the rails of the Pony Express in the Old West with the Runaway
    Train table.
  * Explore the universe, taking the controls of the Hyper Space table.

                      The Guy Game Announced
             Hottie Hi-Jinks Coming to PlayStation 2 and Xbox

Combining spring break excitement with an engaging trivia challenge
TOPHEAVY Studios and Gathering, a publishing label of Take-Two Interactive
Software, Inc. today announced The Guy Game, a new video game based around
the insanity that is Spring Break. Available in August for the PlayStation2
computer entertainment system and the Xbox video game system from
Microsoft, The Guy Game (ESRB Rating: M) was shot live on location on South
Padre Island during Spring Break, and challenges players to match wits with
over 60 attractive co-eds, all of whom are set on showing off their best
"assets."

"I feel innovation is incredibly important in the video game industry. With
The Guy Game we set out to do something completely different than what had
been done before," said Jeff Spangenberg, CEO of TOPHEAVY Studios. "We feel
that guys will be extremely pleased with the final result."

Features of The Guy Game include:

  * 20 outrageous episodes featuring interviews, stunts and challenges
    with over 60 attractive college babes;
  * Hosted by funnyman Matt Sadler, as seen on MTV and winner of HBO's
    National Talent Search;
  * Smackdown with up to four players. Top scorer becomes "President" and
    makes the rules; low scorer loses influence and respect;
  * Over 1000 popular trivia questions from the worlds of sports, movies,

TV and more;
    * Choose one of eight sexy babes to be a personal cheerleader;
    * Find out who has the biggest Ballz in high-speed action mini-games
      such as Ballz Out, Ballz In and Ballz Shotz;
    * Features the world famous Hottie Challenge.

The Guy Game is rated 'M' by the ESRB and is scheduled for release in
August.

                    UK Bans PlayStation 'Chipping'

The selling of "mod chips" for Sony PlayStation 2 game consoles has been
ruled illegal by a UK high court.

A PlayStation 2 with a modified chip installed can play imported or pirated
copies of the console's video games.

Mr Justice Laddie backed Sony's legal argument that its intellectual
property was being infringed by people selling the chips to console owners.

The ruling is thought to be one of the first brought under a controversial
European Union directive on copyright.

Sony brought its case against a man called David Ball who was accused of
selling about 1,500 "Messiah" mod chips.

In the High Court, Mr Justice Laddie ruled that Mr Ball was acting
illegally in selling the chips which get around the built-in copy
protection system on Sony's console.

As well as declaring the sale of the mod chips illegal, Mr Laddie said that
the use, advertising or possession of them for commercial purposes should
be considered illegal too.

Sony brought the case under the EU Copyright Directive which was enacted in
the UK in October 2003.

Under that directive, it is illegal to circumvent copy protection systems.
But some cyber-liberties advocates claim that such laws only enshrine
existing monopolies.

They say that neither professional criminals nor technically savvy users
will be deterred by such legislation.

The ruling is not the first victory Sony has won against makers of mod
chips. In Belgium it also won a similar case against another mod chip
seller.

However, in Italy a judge threw out Sony's case saying it was up to owners
of a console what they did with it.

Similarly in Spain, mod chips are seen as legal despite the EU copyright
legislation.

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Technology to Widen Reach of Amber Alerts

A new technology debuting in 12 states will significantly extend Amber
alerts, reaching cell phones, e-mail and handheld computers, and could also
be used to transmit weather and terrorism alerts.

"It might not be the all-alert system, but the backbone is going to be
there," said Chris Warner, president of E2C in Scottsdale, Ariz., which led
the system's development. "Homeland Security could take it right over."

Police officers in Arizona and Washington, starting Monday, were able to
send Amber alerts - notifications of a child abduction - from a highly
encrypted system in their cars then update them with photos and more
detailed descriptions, Warner said. Ten other states are expected to launch
the expanded alerts this summer.

"The goal of this is to make it so pervasive, no one will be stupid enough
to take a child," said Warner.

The system will use a simple broadcast technology that takes the
information into a Web portal and reconfigures it for different types of
broadcast. A state department of transportation, for instance, might
receive one format for its road signs and another for its information
number.

Using the new system, people with cell phones can sign up for Amber alerts
in with county or state authorities. The text of an alert can be shot
immediately to local TV news programs' Web sites, with automatic updates.

"What we've done is create a fairly simple publishing and broadcasting
tool," said Stuart McKee, who worked on the system when he was chief
information officer for Washington state and is now the U.S. national
technology officer for Microsoft Corp.

The system also represents a next generation of public warning.

Many state emergency managers have clamored for a system that would
instantly dispatch disaster information, including evacuation maps, on cell
phones, the Internet and hand-held devices.

Gov. Brad Henry of Oklahoma has said he hopes the technology could
eventually be used to warn residents about severe weather, said Phil
Bacharach, a state spokesman.

The idea came about after McKee saw Warner give a presentation on another
information-sharing network he had developed, Earth911, an Internet
clearinghouse with local information about recycling different types of
trash.

State agencies and companies including Hewlett-Packard Co., Intel Corp. and

Symantec Corp. worked together for 18 months to develop the system. Symantec said in May it is providing the external security monitoring of the host site and backup locations. The companies donated a total of $4 million in development time, Warner said.

The system will help police in part because they can spend much of the 24 hours after an Amber alert is issued answering phone calls from people looking for more information, McKee said.

Amber alerts were created after the 1997 kidnapping and murder of 9-year-old Amber Hagerman, who was abducted while riding her bicycle in Arlington, Texas.

New Technology Heralds Unlimited Web Sites - ICANN

ICANN, the U.S. body overseeing Web site allocations globally, has launched a new technology that will allow virtually unlimited Internet addresses, its chairman told Reuters on Tuesday.

Vinton Cerf of the Internet Corp. for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) said the next-generation protocol, IPv6, had been added to its root server systems, making it possible for every person or device to have an Internet protocol address.

Rapid growth in the use of the World Wide Web has in recent times prompted concerns about future scarcity of domain addresses, with demand threatening to overload the existing system, the IPv4.

"This is a big, big step," Cerf said, speaking on sidelines of ICANN's annual conference held in the Malaysian capital.

Los Angeles-based ICANN was given the job of overseeing the Internet's naming and numbering system globally by the U.S. government.

Cerf said about two-thirds of the 4.3 billion Internet addresses currently available were used up, adding that IPv6 could magnify capacity by some "25,000 trillion trillion times."

He said the IPv6 system would run parallel to IPv4 for about 20 years to ensure that any bugs or system errors were weeded out.

Microsoft Settles Lawsuit Against Lindows

Microsoft Corp. settled all its trademark infringement suits against Lindows Inc. with a $20 million payment to the Linux operating system upstart, which agreed to change its name to Linspire.

Details of the settlement, reached Friday, were disclosed in documents Lindows filed Monday with the Securities and Exchange Commission as part of plans for an initial public offering.

In a statement, the companies said the settlement ends a spate of litigation in the United States and abroad.

"We are pleased that Lindows will now compete in the market place with a name distinctly its own," said Tom Burt, Microsoft's deputy general counsel.

Lindows chief executive Michael Robertson said the terms "make business sense for all parties."

Microsoft, based in Redmond, Wash., sued San Diego-based Lindows in 2001 in U.S. District Court here, alleging the name infringed on its trademark for the ubiquitous Windows operating system. Microsoft then filed similar complaints in Europe and Canada. It won preliminary injunctions in the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden, before quietly settling the Dutch case.

In addition to the U.S. litigation, cases were pending in France, Spain and Canada.

In April, Lindows changed the name of its products to Linspire after U.S. District Judge John Coughenour refused to halt the trademark infringement cases outside the United States.

But the company had until now stuck with Lindows as a corporate name.

Lindows makes a computer operating system that competes with Windows but is based on the Linux operating system.

Proponents of Linux and other open-source technology say it is cheaper and can be more secure, in part because the underlying software blueprints and any improvements are freely shared.

Microsoft tightly guards the proprietary blueprints for Windows.

Under the settlement, Lindows has 60 days to stop using the Lindows name on its products.

Microsoft will pay Lindows $15 million in the next 30 days. The remaining $5 million will paid out once Lindows transfers control of most of Lindows-related Web site names over to Microsoft. That must be done by Jan. 25.

Lindows has four years to continue using two of its Web addresses - www.lindows.com and www.lindowsinc.com - but only to redirect visitors to its new Web sites. After the four years have passed, those sites will also be transferred to Microsoft.

The San Diego company said the cash settlement and the public offering could help eliminate concerns that it will not be able to stay afloat, but it noted that it still expects to have significant losses over the next several years.

SCO Suffers Legal Setback

The SCO Group took a hit Wednesday when a circuit court judge in Michigan dismissed the Unix software provider's claim that automaker DaimlerChrysler violated its software agreement by refusing to provide certification of compliance with the provisions of that agreement.

SCO spokesperson Blake Stowell told NewsFactor that Judge Ray Lee Chabot

tossed aside all but one of the company's motions in the case, essentially granting DaimlerChrysler's motion for dismissal of the lawsuit. The remaining sticking point is whether the auto giant took too long to certify compliance with the Unix software agreement, he said.

"Their lawyer argued that DaimlerChrysler did offer certification compliance, but they did that after the suit was filed," Stowell said. "We are satisfied that DaimlerChrysler has certified its compliance with the agreement, and the purposes of our litigation have been fulfilled."

The suit was initially filed in March, along with another action against AutoZone that alleges software-copyright violations. That suit charges AutoZone with violating SCO's Unix copyrights by running versions of the Linux (news - web sites) operating system that contain code from SCO's proprietary Unix System V software.

That case is on hold, with SCO recently given more time to collect information, through discovery and depositions, before proceeding with a preliminary injunction.

SCO also has suits pending against IBM and Novell, charging copyright infringement. In response, Linux vendors Red Hat, HP and Novell are offering various types of indemnification to their customers. SCO's amended suit against IBM includes nine allegations of copyright and contractual violations, with SCO seeking US$5 billion in damages.

Stowell said the Michigan ruling would not impact the other cases, pointing out that they involve software distribution and title issues.

Yankee Group analyst Laura DiDio told NewsFactor that the case against DaimlerChrysler was a long shot, and that the ruling came as no surprise. "They may have been overreaching when they took on a multinational corporation like this," she said. "This certainly puts a damper on any additional lawsuits by SCO."

SCO sent letters to thousands of Unix licensees in December, requiring that they offer proof of compliance with their contracts within 30 days.

Virus Purporting Bin Laden Suicide Hits Web

A virus purporting to show images of Osama Bin Laden's suicide popped up on the Internet on Friday, designed to entice recipients to open a file that unleashes malicious software code, security experts said.

The virus was attached to a message that was posted on over 30,000 usenet newsgroups and is not being spread via e-mail, said Web security vendor Sophos.

The U.S. government has been hunting for Bin Laden since 2001, holding him responsible for masterminding the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001, but he has not yet been found.

Chris Kraft, senior security analyst at Sophos, said the message and virus was designed to lure unsuspecting readers into opening a file, similar to the Anna Kournikova virus that enticed readers to open a file that unleashed malicious software code.

"If you don't know the person or the origin of a message, you shouldn't be opening it," Kraft said.

The fake Bin Laden suicide file, when opened, unleashes a program called a Trojan horse that makes it possible for attackers to take over infected personal computers running Microsoft Corp.'s Windows operating system.

Kraft said the virus itself had already appeared on the Internet before, but the virus writer had apparently repackaged it by saying it contained Bin Laden's suicide photos.

More Worms Inch Across the Internet

New versions of the Bagle and MyDoom worms surfaced on the Internet this week, and appear to be spreading.

Bagle.AI and MyDoom.N are both so-called "mass mailing" worms that use a built-in SMTP engine that sends e-mail messages carrying worm-infected file attachments from computer to computer on the Internet, both using faked (or "spoofed") sender addresses, antivirus companies say.

The new worm variants are just the latest in a string of virus releases in recent days that have antivirus software companies scrambling to keep their customers protected.

W32.Bagle.AI first appeared Monday and is rated a "medium" threat by McAfee's Antivirus Research Team, citing reports of the virus from customers. McAfee rates MyDoom.N a "low" threat, whereas Computer Associates International notes the prevalence and destructiveness of the worm.

Similar to earlier versions of Bagle, the AI variant spreads through shared file folders and in e-mail messages carrying the worm file as an attachment, according to advisories from Sophos and McAfee.

E-mail messages generated by the worm used forged (or "spoofed") sender addresses and the subject line "Re:" Worm-infected file attachments might be in.zip,.exe,.scr,.com, or.cpl and also have nonspecific names like "Moreinfo," "Details," or "Readme," antivirus companies say.

Infected file attachments use one of a short list of names including "MP3," "Doll," and "Cat."

The worm can also send copies of itself as a password-protected compressed file with a.zip extension. The password needed to unzip the.zip file is contained in a second file with a.txt,.ini,.doc, or other extensions, McAfee says.

The MyDoom.N worm uses spoofed sender addresses such as "postmaster," "Post Office," and "MAILER-DAEMON" that make the e-mail resemble a rejected message.

MyDoom.N messages also have nondescript Subject lines such as "hello," "hi," and "delivery failed." Virus file attachments have names like "readme," "mail," "text," and "attachment." File extensions include .cmd, .bat, .com, .exe, and .zip, McAfee says.

Antivirus companies issued updated virus definitions that can detect the new Bagle and MyDoom variants and recommended that customers update their antivirus software.

N.Y. Settles E-Mail Marketer Lawsuit

New York authorities on Monday settled a lawsuit filed against a Colorado-based electronic mail marketer for allegedly sending unsolicited and deceptive "spam" messages on behalf of clients.

New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer said the marketer, Scott Richter, and his company, OptInRealBig.com, paid $40,000 in penalties and $10,000 in investigative costs under the agreement, which was signed before state Supreme Court Justice Eileen Bransten in Manhattan. The company also agreed to provide Spitzer's office with customer information and all advertisements it sends as well as promising to use proper identifying information when registering domain names.

"This settlement holds Richter and his company to a new standard of accountability in their delivery of e-mails," Spitzer said. "If he does not fulfill these standards, he will find himself back in court, facing greater penalties."

When Spitzer filed the civil suit against Richter, OptInRealBig.com and some of the company's clients and other individuals in December 2003, the attorney general said he was seeking $20 million in penalties.

Steve Richter, father and lawyer of Scott Richter, said Monday the settlement basically involved a "no harm, no foul" situation from Richter's standpoint. The fact the attorney general settled for $50,000 while initially talking about $20 million in damages "speaks for itself," Steve Richter said.

Richter said he and his son were also angered by a news release Monday from Spitzer in which Scott Richter was referred to as a "deceptive spammer."

"We vigorously and strongly dispute that claim because there is no finding by anyone that OptInRealBig.com or Scott Richter is a deceptive spammer," Steve Richter said. "That misrepresents the settlement."

OptInRealBig.com said in a statement Monday that as part of the settlement with Spitzer, it agreed to abide by the terms of the 2003 federal Can Spam Act. The Westminster, Colo.-based company said it's been complying with the act all along anyway.

Spitzer spokesman Brad Maione said neither Scott Richter nor OptInRealBig.com admitted any wrongdoing in the settlement.

When announcing his suit, Spitzer said special Hotmail e-mail accounts set up by his investigators found thousands of e-mails in May and June 2003 that carried bogus "from" and "subject" lines, often indicating that the messages were part of ongoing conversations instead of being unsolicited commercial lures.

A lawsuit Microsoft Corp. filed against Richter in Washington state was not affected by New York's settlement.

Hacker Indicted In One of Biggest Case of Online Data Theft

A 45-year-old man was indicted on charges of hacking into the computers of a marketing company with one of the world's largest databases of personal, financial and company information, officials said.

The indictment unsealed in Arkansas charges Florida resident Scott Levine with conspiracy, unauthorized access of a protected computer, access device fraud, money laundering and obstruction of justice.

"The charges stem from an alleged scheme to steal vast amounts of personal information from a company database and represent what may be the largest cases of intrusion of personal data to date," the Justice Department said in a statement.

Officials said Levine controlled a company called Snipermail, which sent out vast amounts of e-mail ads on behalf of advertisers or their brokers.

The indictment said Levine and other Snipermail employees broke into a computer database owned by Arkansas-based Acxiom Corporation, one of the world's largest companies managing personal, financial, and corporate data. He then sold e-mail addresses to other marketing firms.

Officials did not say how much personal data may have been stolen. But the indictment charges 139 counts of illegal access, and said Levine downloaded some 8.2 gigabytes of data from the Acxiom server from April 2002 to August 2003.

"The protection of personal information stored on our nation's computer systems is critical to public trust in those networks and to the health of our economy," said Assistant Attorney General Christopher Wray.

"We will aggressively pursue those who steal private information from computer networks and make it clear that there are serious consequences for such crimes."

Six other individuals associated with Snipermail have agreed to cooperate in the investigation, officials said.

Microsoft Takes on the Phishers

Microsoft is donating close to $50,000 worth of software to an anti-crime agency to help stamp out phishing and other online fraud activities.

The donation, which comes with the services of a full-time analyst from Microsoft's Internet Safety Enforcement group, goes to the National Cyber-Forensics & Training Alliance, an anti-crime organization run by the FBI (news - web sites), the National White Collar Crime Center, Carnegie Mellon University and West Virginia University.

The analyst will help the unit interpret the data as it relates to the Can-Span Act and what is known about phishers. He or she will also help the unit design training programs for enforcement agencies.

"The tactics of spammers, hackers and other online con artists are becoming increasingly sophisticated, and as a company, Microsoft is dedicating resources to help law enforcement find those responsible for harming consumers," Nancy Anderson, deputy general counsel for the company, said in a statement.

The donation is part of Microsoft' bigger push to root out virus writers that target its applications and operating system. For all the gripes - legitimate and not - about security flaws in Microsoft's software, few would charge that Microsoft is not leveraging its greatest asset: its bank account. Many credit the increase in leads and arrests with Microsoft's proffered bounty.

"I doubt we would have ever caught the Netsky author if it hadn't been for that," Carole Theriault, Security Consultant with Sophos, tells NewsFactor.

"People are getting caught because they talk, and their friends turn them in because of the reward," Panda Software CTO Patrick Hinojosa agrees.

Now, Microsoft is working to curtail phishing activity. While these scams do not always make headlines the way a new virus does, they are a related concern. Indeed, many of these e-mails piggyback on viruses written specifically for this purpose.

Growing Numbers Phishing, while not directly traced to Microsoft's security flaws, is having as great an impact on online users as the viruses are. Phishing employs e-mail lures to "fish" for identity information, such as passwords and financial data. Armed with this personal data information, scammers commit identity theft and fraud, explains Dan Meyer, director of communications for the Anti-Phishing Working Group and director of product marketing at Tumbleweed, a corporate anti-spam vendor. "We've seen a pretty significant growth trend over a number of months, and there is nothing that is going to change that in the near future," says Meyer.

Dell Launches Site To Fight Spyware, Viruses

Dell Inc. on Tuesday launched a site to help consumers battle the growing number of computer problems related to spyware, viruses and other online security threats.

In debuting the site, Dell, based in Round Rock, Texas, joined Yahoo Inc., Microsoft Corp. and a growing list of other companies offering services to help consumers battle the increasing number of malicious applications floating around the network.

Dell's and the others' motives are not only altruistic. Virus attacks and spyware have prompted an increasing number of customers to contact computer, software and services vendors, placing a heavy burden on customer service operations.

"Spyware is the root cause of many of the performance problems our customers face," Mike George, vice president and general manager of the computer maker's consumer business, said in a statement.

Up to 20 percent of the calls received by Dell's consumer-desktop technical support workers are for spyware and virus-related issues, far surpassing

any other performance issue, George said.

The new PC Security site includes how-to information on identifying
spyware, viruses and other Internet threats; tips for protecting PCs; and
information and promotions on firewall, anti-virus and anti-spyware
products.

Phone support for troubleshooting and removing malicious software is
available to Dell customers for $39 per incident.

Users Sidestep Required Logins For Content Sites

Readers fed up with entering personal information in exchange for accessing
Web site content can circumvent the process using BugMeNot.com to generate
login names and passwords for sites requiring registration

Many content Web sites, particularly newspapers, oblige readers to login to
view content. Content providers offer readers access free of charge in
exchange for demographic information - most commonly gender, birth year,
and ZIP code. The site then uses the demographic information for
advertising purposes.

Newspapers have long claimed that they need to demographic information to
maintain advertising revenue. However, there has been widespread
speculation that registration information fuels spam. Web users are
generally reluctant to provide personal information and many readers are
known to enter false information.

To use BugMeNot, users enter the URL of the registration page for a site
that requires login on the BugMeNot site. The site then provides bogus
account information that allows users to access the site without providing
their own demographic information. If the site has not already been
"liberated" by BugMeNot, users receive instructions for creating a login.

According to their Web site, Australia-based BugMeNot.com has liberated
almost 16,000 sites from what they term "registration bondage." The most
actively requested site on BugMeNot.com are:

  1. www.nytimes.com
  2. www.washingtonpost.com
  3. www.latimes.com
  4. www.ajc.com
  5. www.chicagotribune.com

BugMeNot works with Mozilla and Internet Explorer. The site also offers a
toolbar that users can install by dragging to their browser. The site also
offers a plug-in for Mozilla written by Eric Hamiter and a Dean
Wilson-authored plug-in for IE.

Another free service, specifically for the New York Times, is New York
Times Link Generator. Created by Stanford-bound teenager, and
self-proclaimed hacker, Aaron Swartz, this site creates Web-log-safe links.
Web-loggers can then place these links on their Web logs to direct users to
New York Times content, bypassing the login.

The BugMeNot site is decidedly anti-commercial, including a manifesto
against required logins, providing instructions for linking to the site,

and even requests donations for the cause. The site also promotes both
Mailinator and Spamgourment to users for creation of pseudo e-mail
addresses that can be used for registration.

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